

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting
Washington, DC

November 3-4, 2003

Board members present: Robin Lohnes, Hilleary Bogley, Dr. Jay Merriam, Bill Higham, and Larry Johnson. Board member not present: Gary Zakotnik. Washington Office and BLM staff: Ed Shepard, Jeff Rawson, Don Glenn, Sharon Kipping, EK James, and Sally Spencer, and Ann Aldrich, Eastern States, Dean Bolstad and Ramona DeLorme; Linda Coates-Markle, and John Christensen, USDA, Forest Service representatives: Ralph Giffen and Toni Strauss. Former Board members present were Brent Eldridge and Richard Sewing.

Robin Lohnes, Co-Chair opened the meeting at 8:12 a.m., November 3, 2003.

She introduced the Advisory Board members and Ed Shepard to the public in attendance.

Ed Shepard welcomed everyone. He noted that the National Wild Horse and Burro Program are getting closer to their goal, which is getting down to AML. He introduced Ann Aldrich, Associate State Director, Eastern States, who welcomed the Board and visitors to Washington. She stated that she was proud of the Adoptions in the East.

June 2003 Minutes

The minutes were approved by the Board with one correction on page 8, 1st paragraph. "It's a political..." changed to read, "It's not a political..."

June Recommendations/Response

Ed Shepard reviewed the June 2003 Recommendations:

1. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that the Strategic Plan be signed by the Director as soon as possible.

The action items to accomplish the goals and objectives of the draft Strategic Plan address important issues, but the work involved to accomplish action item tasks exceed BLM's capability to accomplish the work within the five year life of the plan. In addition, the action items do not fully correspond with immediate two to three year high WH&B program priorities to complete establishment of AMLs, achieve AML by 2005 and increase the number successful adoptions.

BLM requests further discussion of this issue by the Board.

2. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that BLM enter into an MOU with the Foundation by the end of the fiscal year.

A draft of the BLM/National Wild Horse and Burro Foundation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being reviewed by BLM. Further coordination with the Foundation is anticipated before finalization.

3. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that the BLM and USDA investigate alternative funding authorities and/or incentives as a means of continuing and expanding the WY Pilot Project.

BLM in coordination with the United States Forest Service has made preliminary contact with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Rural Community Development to see if rural community development grant funds could be used for this purpose. The initial reaction was negative; however, a contact through the Wyoming State Department of Agriculture directly to the local representative of that office will be pursued.

2003 Nominations Update

Ed Shepard explained where the nominations package is for the three open positions on the Board. The package has been submitted to the Department but has not yet been finalized. He was unable to give a definite date for finalization.

Mr. Shepard presented plaques to the departing Board members (Brent Eldridge, Richard Sewing and Wayne Burkhardt) for their dedicated service on the Board. Robin Lohnes also extended her gratitude to them as well.

Steering Committee Update

The Steering Committee is composed of Associate State Directors in every state with a Wild Horse and Burro program. They help provide the link to the wild horse and burro field offices. The Committee meets four times a year and, if additional meetings are necessary, with a conference call. The Director attended the September 11, 2003 Steering Committee meeting, in Washington, DC. At this session, the Director challenged the steering committee regarding management of the program. The Steering Committee agreed that the goal to reaching AML can not be done state-by-state but must be on a national basis.

FY-03 Program - Gathers, Adoptions, Establishment of AML, and Numbers in Captivity

Dean Bolstad reviewed the Advisory Board notebook inserts that included the FY2004 Gather Schedule, Pipeline Report, Facility Capacity and Animals in Captivity Report as of 10/29/03, a table entitled HMAs with Established Appropriate Management Levels (AML), and Herd Area (HA) and Herd Management Area (HMA) Statistics. The Board thanked the Reno Office for providing the HA and HMA Statistics. Dean presented a

PowerPoint that summarized information included in the Notebook and that also reviewed adoption and removal numbers during the last four years.

BLM is going to begin research on census techniques. Larry Johnson inquired as to who is responsible for census data. It was explained that individual states determine which HMAs are censused and what method of census is used. Line Managers and their staffs plan and complete this work with ultimate responsibility assigned to State Directors. This was followed by a discussion on censusing of wild horses and burros on the range and how it affects setting of AML. The Board indicated concern that not enough funding for census was available. A discussion followed pertaining to census techniques, research regarding census, and its relationship to the Land Use Plan. The Board expressed concern over the accountability of establishment of AML at the field level. The BLM is preparing an Instruction Memorandum requiring field offices to provide a time schedule to complete the initial establishment of AMLs for some HMAs. The Board requested a copy of the instruction memorandum. The Board thanked Dean for the comprehensive overview of the program. In response to the Board's request he provided historical data for removals, adoptions, and estimated on the range population numbers from 1971 to present.

There was a discussion on old and new long-term holdings. The two new long-term holding facilities opened on September 8, 2003 and can receive up to 600 animals by December 31, 2003. Total capacity for the two new long term holding facilities is 4000 head.

The Board followed with a recommendation: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends BLM analyze the prioritization of long-term holding as a primary method of obtaining AML by reducing the budget for adoptions, costs of all associated program elements, such as short-term holding, opening facilities for periodic adoption, and inoculations.

FY04 Funding

Reprogramming funds at the end of the year has been necessary in the Wild Horse and Burro Program for the past 2 years. Congress has told the BLM that this will not be approved in the future and has asked for a report on how BLM intends to solve this problem permanently. One option that was discussed with the Board involved possible permanent reprogramming of \$12.8 million. As of the Board meeting, there is no firm proposal on what the Report to Congress will entail.

Review and Assessment of the: "Living Legends in Balance with the Land" Initiative

A team led by Lili Thomas, of the Washington Office wild horse and burro program staff, reviewed the initiative and developed alternatives to be considered as a means of continuing progress towards achieving appropriate management levels of wild horses and

burros. This information has been utilized in the current development of program needs including funding proposals for the wild horse and burro program

Strategic Plan

There was a discussion about the goals, objectives and action item and their relationship to the Bureau's priorities. It was decided that Jeff Rawson would furnish the Board, by e-mail, a revised version of the Strategic Plan with the action items redlined for their further review. The Board requested an evaluation process to be included in the Strategic Plan.

Fertility Control Research

Linda Coates-Markle gave an overview of the Strategic Research Plan (2000-2003), and research efforts in health and handling, fertility control, genetics, population's estimates (census). All research is to help attain long-term management objectives. Estimated proposed funding for the research is \$325,000. She discussed in detail the Fertility Control Field Trial Plan, including individual based trials and populations based trials. Treatment protocols, the possibility of a FDA exemption, Comparative Adjuvant Trial and other agents were also discussed. There will be research pursued in census techniques to focus on the most suitable techniques. It was agreed by the Board that Larry Johnson would be the Board's liaison for the research in the census techniques. The Board expressed concern about protocols for the treatment of small fragmented herds. The Bureau is aware of these concerns and is pursuing research in genetics of small herds to ensure this effort is effectively managed. If the BLM pursues an exemption of the FDA, Bill Higham agreed to be the Board's liaison in this effort.

Forest Service

Ralph Giffen, USDA, Forest Service representative, introduced a new point of contact for BLM. The new Forest Service position will enable greater presence at the meetings and help deal with issues. The position is located in the Reno/Sparks area. Toni Strauss was selected and will begin January, 2004. She will be the liaison with the Wild Horse and Burro Program and the Forest Service.

Action Sub-Committee

The Action Sub-committee reported to the Board their proposals to create an action plan to successfully adopt more wild horses and burros. The action plan addresses goals in marketing and public relations, adoptions, and personnel. The Board accepted the report. They fully support these efforts to improve the adoption program and are very appreciative of the Foundations efforts. The Board expressed an interest in emphasizing internet and contracting adoptions.

Public comments began at 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Robin opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

During the adoption discussion the issue of reducing the time of horses destined for long-term holding in short-term holding area arose. In order to gather further information, the Board made the following recommendation: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that BLM survey facility managers and veterinarians to consider reducing the time in short-term facilities. Results of the survey should be coordinated with the requested cost benefit analysis. Jay Merriam will be the Board's liaison.

2003 Adopters Survey Result

Sally Spencer, National Wild Horse & Burro Marketing Specialist, presented to the Board the 2003 Adopters Survey Results. The Bureau will utilize this information to enhance the adoption process.

Review of the Buddy System

Dean Bolstad reported on the findings of a BLM team that was assigned to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program Buddy System adoption method and develop recommendations for future use of reduced fees and/or the Buddy System. The Buddy System adoption method allows an adopter who has selected one full fee animal to select a companion animal at a reduced fee of \$25. The method has been primarily used in Arizona, Eastern States and Montana with one trial in Oregon. The team's findings were that the Buddy System probably increased the total number of animals adopted in FY03, that adoption fee receipts were reduced by the Buddy System and that the largest age group selected as buddies were yearlings.

The team recommended that the Buddy System be **continued/discontinued (check with Dean)**, and that horses four years of age and older and burros 10 years of age and older be offered at a reduced fee as low as \$25 subject to the discretion of the authorized officer. Additionally, reduced fee animals offered at satellite adoptions would start at the specified fee with opportunity for the adoption fee to be increased through competitive bidding. The reduced fee would be applied at BLM wild horse corral facilities without competitive bidding. The use of reduced fees would be evaluated after one year.

The team felt that reduced fees for this age class of horses might provide incentive for adoption and reduce the number of younger animals going to long term holding, that adoption of mare/foal pairs might increase, that feed days at BLM corral may be reduced, and that there could be compliance issues for reduced fee animals.

Dean stated that BLM proposes to issue guidance to implement the team's recommendation and solicited the Board's feedback. The Board concluded that they

didn't have enough data or information concerning results of the Buddy System, compliance needs, and long term implications of the recommendation on successful marketing of horses to take a position on the issue.

Also, during the discussion the Board recommended that BLM do a cost benefit analysis to include the impact on both budget and staff on the following:

Keeping Palomino Valley Corrals and Elm Creek open on Saturdays, either every Saturday or one Saturday per month, and/or seasonally, for potential adopters to view animals and/or adopt animals.

Robin reminded the Board and BLM that the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Charter will be expiring in June 2004. The Board and BLM need to act on it soon in order for it to be approved before the May 10, 2004 meeting.

Board Meeting Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>
February 9, 2004	Phoenix, AZ
May 10, 2004	Tulsa, OK
August 9, 2004	TBA
November 8, 2004	TBA

The Board's Recommendations are on the following page.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.